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THE REALIZATION OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Promoting the right to development in the context of the United Nations Decade for the Elimination of Poverty (1997-2006)

Report of the Secretary-General submitted in accordance with Sub-Commission decision 1998/105

Introduction

1. In its decision 1998/105 of 20 August 1998, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, recalled its resolution 1996/22 of 29 August 1996 in which it requested the Secretary-General to invite all relevant United Nations bodies and agencies to step up their action aimed at promoting international cooperation for the realization of the right to development in the context of the United Nations Decade for the Elimination of Poverty (1997-2006) and to provide him with the information thereon. The Secretary-General was also requested to transmit annually to the Sub-Commission the information received.

2. The present document, containing substantive information received in response to a note verbale addressed to relevant United Nations bodies and agencies, is submitted in accordance with that request.

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

[Original: English]
[1 June 1999]

UNIDIR's report focused on the links between disarmament and development. It referred extensively to the "Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of light Weapons" signed by the 16 States members of the Economic Community of West African States on 31 October 1998. Reference was also made to a detailed study entitled "A peace of Timbuktu: Democratic governance, development and African peacemaking" which highlighted the fact that in conflict areas, there can be no development until the physical security of the civilians has been firmly established; this gave rise to the doctrine of "security for development" or "security first". ' The experience of Mali shows that peacemaking and peace-building are both integral parts of the development process and that democratic governance, access to resources and imaginative infrastructure investment which reduces the competition for natural space are profitable in many ways. In addition, the lessons learned from Mali underlined two major areas of risk: the management of existing water and civil unrest.

International Trade Centre (ITC)

[Original: English]
[2 June 1999]

1. To reduce poverty, ITC advocates the approach based on harnessing the capabilities of poor communities to generate additional income through exports. It has undertaken a number of activities that bring micro producers' wares into export channels and established mechanisms to ensure that a significant proportion of revenue generated is retained for the benefit of the poor.

2. ITC also stressed that for certain subsectors, it is possible to link the poor producers, generally working in isolation, with buyers in many export markets. The emergence of a well-regulated multilateral trading system and the special provisions for developing countries contained in the various agreements of the World Trade Organization have opened up markets in many countries for products made in the subsectors concerned.

3. The potential for an export-led poverty reduction programme to achieve results is substantial. For instance, the market for artisanal products is US$ 2-3 billion. If the market for textiles, giftware and special agro-products is added, a market worth tens of billions of dollars is available. The size of the market and the sensitivities displayed by a substantial proportion of its customers suggest that it offers unique opportunities for alleviating poverty.

4. ITC's assessment of projects in three countries - Sri Lanka, Ecuador and Ghana - revealed that the concept of developing groups of micro producers for exporting products made from locally available raw materials could be valuable

if the programmes based on it are designed with due care and implemented in a sustainable manner. Encouraged by the success of such experiences, ITC is broadening the concept to address urban poverty as well, and is currently developing new projects of this type for Ghana and Swaziland. Several other countries have asked for ITC's assistance in this field.

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

[Original: English]
[2 June 1999]

1. Reference was made to IMO's role as a global regulatory body, providing safe, efficient and environmentally sound maritime transport infrastructures to promote the fulfilment of the right to development.

2. The seafaring industries, which frequently draw on the poorest strata of the population in developing countries for employment, have shown that employment in the shipping industry has a major impact on both rural and urban poor (access to foreign currency, regular salary, economic viability for the families of seafarers and for the local community).

3. The regulatory regime developed by IMO provides a framework to develop integrated coastal zone management in developing countries, including port development and the protection of coastal and marine zones.

World Health Organization (WHO)

[Original: English]
[3 June 1999]

1. In response to a growing body of research evidence WHO is vigorously promoting the message that health enhances the capabilities of the poor and builds both social and human capital.

2. WHO promotes its cooperation through its involvement in international and national meetings on the contribution of health to poverty reduction and in interactive follow-up activities through the International Poverty and Health Network.

3. An entire new cluster of WHO technical programmes has also been established to promote health in the context of sustainable human development, including a renewed emphasis on reducing malnutrition and improving management of environmental risks to human health, integrating health dimensions into poverty reduction programmes and protecting vulnerable populations in situations of crisis and post-crisis; promoting the synergy between health and human rights constitutes an additional priority.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

[Original: English]
[3 June 1999]

1. Concerning poverty elimination, ECLAC has continued to assist Governments in the region in the analysis of the significant economic and institutional reforms carried out, with emphasis on the result in terms of economic growth and social equity. In addition, support was given to countries in the design, implementation and monitoring of social policies and programmes, particularly in the areas of education, health, and poverty eradication and income distribution.

2. ECLAC has issued a series of publications relating to poverty entitled "Social Panorama of Latin America". The 1996 issue included an analysis of available statistical data and indicators for improved social conditions. The 1997 issue focused on the structural aspects of income distribution, the composition of employment and the transmission between generations of educational and labour opportunities. In 1998, it was centred on social expenditure and the poverty situation in the region.

3. ECLAC has convened the first regional conference in follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and has submitted to Governments a study entitled "The Equity Gap, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Social Summit". The study highlighted, in particular, existing conditions of poverty, employment and social integration.

4. In the field of technical cooperation, ECLAC assistance was provided to Costa Rica in the elaboration of a national anti-poverty plan and to Honduras to formulate anti-poverty policies and to design and evaluate social policies and programmes.

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS/Habitat)

[Original: English]
[4 June 1999]

1. Habitat underlined its close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and international housing organizations, i.e. the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, and the European Federation of National Organization Working with the Homeless, in particular with regard to the elaboration of strategy documents. The first strategy document provides guidelines to countries on the practical aspects of the realization of the human right to adequate housing. Two others deal respectively with support for the implementation of strategies to combat homelessness and women and property rights.

2. UNCHS also referred to its active participation in the work of the ad hoc Group on the Right to Development of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) with special attention to the right to adequate housing of people living in poverty.

3. At the conclusion of the International Conference on Urban Poverty, held in Florence in November 1997, regional forums were formed at initial meetings in Fukuoka (Japan) and Nairobi (Kenya) to exchange experience and define strategies for the action. The next international conference on urban poverty will take place in Côte d'Ivoire in October 1999. Habitat's activities during the period under review led to a focus on the specific relationship between crime and urban poverty and the launching of the "Safer Cities Programme".

4. While UNCHS activities in the field of urban poverty at this initial stage focused on research, networking, strategy formulation and awareness-building, poverty reduction in urban areas is expected to become a central goal of Habitat's work, the outcome of which will respond to the objectives of the United Nations programme to combat poverty.